

**CHOOSING A PLAY, REVISED
AND ENLARGED; SUGGESTIONS
AND BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE
DIRECTOR OF AMATEUR
DRAMATICS**

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Choosing a play, revised and enlarged; suggestions and bibliography for the director of amateur
dramatics by Gertrude E. Johnson

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GERTRUDE E. JOHNSON

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AMATEUR DRAMATICS**

CHOOSING A PLAY

REVISED AND ENLARGED

*SUGGESTIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
FOR THE DIRECTOR OF
AMATEUR DRAMATICS*

BY

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PREFACE

IN view of the fact that the magazine which printed even a list of one-act plays is instantly in great demand in that particular number, and also that constant calls were received asking for suggestions for a play, it seemed there might be a place for such lists, bibliography, and suggestions as are here compiled. I knew from experience, that, obvious as the lists seem, they were in great demand by many who have no time to give to the finding of material for amateur production.

The sale of the first edition in less than a year assures me that it fills a need and I have, therefore, enlarged it, adding material in various forms, bringing it all up to date with complete corrections so far as possible.

In chapter six I have endeavored to gather together some of the most helpful suggestions on acting, which have been given us by those who have succeeded, either as actors or directors.

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There are several books and articles dealing directly with problems of acting, but they are not generally available, and so these quotations may give helpful hints on various matters pertaining to this field.

Exception will be taken by some to the nature of the lists, particularly to those of lower grades, on the ground that they are "trash." I hasten to agree to a certain extent, but let me add that they are the *best* of the lower grades, and so are some advance over much material that is being used every year in the smaller High Schools. Furthermore, while there has been a frequent publishing recently of books and articles touching on all phases of dramatic activity, choice of plays, new movement, betterment of dramatics, pageantry, one-act plays, etc., very few, if any, have been of direct and unquestionable assistance to the smaller High Schools, whose number is legion. These schools stage several plays each year, and form a group which, to my mind, it is of vital importance to reach, if real advance in dramatics is to be made.

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It has been my desire, however, to make this book of some direct assistance to *all* grades of amateur production. It is obviously impossible for some time yet, to hope to have "Androcles and the Lion" or "How He Lied to Her Husband," produced in towns of fifteen hundred, with only a few of the number, perhaps, who know even the author. It is reported by Library Commissions which attempt to help the situation by sending plays of the "better type," that these are returned with letters saying that they are not what is wanted, that the people would not understand them, and that there is no one among the teachers who could put them on. I have been in touch with one commission and so have these facts first hand. Is it not advisable, then, to suggest something that will be possible, both of production and understanding in such a community, than to refuse to send a lower grade of material than we, in our academic halls, think best?

Obviously, there is dire need in the schools for someone trained in dramatic work as well as English, for it is so often the teacher of English to

whose lot it falls to coach the play. For that matter, it may be the teacher of any other branch, from history on through chemistry, or animal husbandry, so little consideration is given to the importance of having some one trained for the work. This is due, of course, to the fact that dramatic activity is considered of extra curricular significance, and not of any definite educational importance. With teachers of some training placed in these schools, we might hope to help in establishing a better understanding of play values, as well as of producing possibilities. We could thus attack the problems of dramatic taste and activities in the place where they would reach the largest number of people, and tend to develop into one of the most potent factors in the "New Movement." Meanwhile, it has seemed to me, as I said at first, that some lists should be available for even the smallest schools, which are going to produce *something*, whether assisted in the choice or not. It is in the hope that the lists of lower grades will be of assistance to some of these schools, that they have been compiled. As op-

portunity offers I trust the standard of selection will be raised in all the smaller schools. I repeat—such opportunity will not come to any great extent, until our educational institutions, particularly our higher ones, are interested in the problems involved in our dramatic taste and activities, as an educational matter, affecting very definitely the people, and so the State. These institutions should set the standards in this as in other studies. They should realize that these problems affect the life of the community very definitely—what affects the community affects the State.